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THEIR HABITAT



Just one known shop are to be found, in all their impurity, Music, Painting, and Culinary Perfection. It is an undiscoverable place, burrowing out of sight, in harmony with the singular and notorious modesty of those who established it. There is no use, for those who have not received the password, in trying to find it. Invited guests and trustful foreigners have been known to pass long evenings in exploring for it, — serious discoverers even, who have found the Treasury of Atræus with facility, and for whom no haystack was big enough to hide the Needle of Cleopatra, — and after evoking quantities of city nightcaps from whole rows of windows, to knock as a

last resort at the District Prison, — a shelter fascinatingly near.

In one of the old studio quarters of New York, then, where the Thebaida of Art on one side the street frown haughtily upon seen-better-day residences across the way; where Fashion has retreated before the lolling bell-pull of the doctor's office and the vestry of the ladies' tailor, lurks this retreat. Passing up and down the flags, one marvels, as a mere antiquarian, at the passion of past generations for lamp-frames twisted out of iron ribbons, and for hammered sconces at the front doors. Did those people actually go about with link-boys and lanterns? As it is, not the most secretive-looking palace of Florence, Ricciardo or other, is better provided with these black candelabra. A perfect luxury of curly iron railings, wriggling up the front steps, masking the areas, and loading the balconies with spiky black flowers, forms a tropical metallic thicket in front of the houses, which sulk in ugly brick, relieved with lintels and cheek-blocks carved in the taste of a former day.

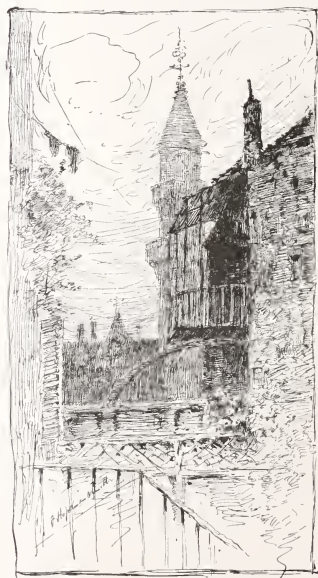
Find, if you can, the most inconspicuous of these entrances, — the kind



of entrance which has two or three different numbers marked on it, and, if possible, some number *and a half*. But do not try the front door; that would be a grave error. Select, if you may, a broad door-sill which emerges from an ordinary portal with every appearance of directness and candor, which spreads forth downward in several shelves of brown-stone, promising a full and frank issue upon the street, but which then doubles on its course, makes a half-spiral,

hunches itself in a lumbering manner over an ostensible cellar door which is not a cellar door, and debouches all at one side, quite deserting in its descent the door-sill it set out to support, which accordingly has to be maintained on a crutch of timber. Rummage under this fortuitous fall of masonry. Find a wicket just high enough to break your shins. Tumble down another system of steps, perfectly invisible, unexpected, and at variance with the front steps system. Open a door, which, if it will open, clangs a warning bell. And now you are in a tunnel which passes completely under a large house; a tunnel long, bare, perspiring, and, if you are not expected, completely dark.

But if you are expected, this Radcliffe-like conduit breaks out into friendly light. A lantern swings before your face and guides you. The farther orifice gives upon a little garden, where female horticulturists air their





geranium pots, in which garden nestles a quaint little box of a place, which is the cubiculum of the Tile Club. The spires of numerous city churches, with which the neighborhood is filled, prick the air all round, sometimes sending

forth the melody of their bells, just veiled by distance. Nearer by, an enormous clock-face on a gigantic Byzantine-looking tower hangs imminent, contemptuously outshining the full moon which stands above it, — “like a dot on an *i*.”

But it is proper to explain a term used just now, so few persons know what a Tile Club is. The opinions of the learned have never coincided upon a definition of the genuine Tile Club, because the learned have never been aware of its existence.

A few years ago, when the decorative mania or cacoethes had fallen like a destructive angel upon the most flourishing cities of America, turning orderly homes into bristling and impenetrable curiosity-shops, and causing the loveliest and purest maidens in the land to smell of turpentine, certain youthful artists began to notice the goings-on of their sisters, their sweethearts, and their wives. Stealing without remorse from these ladies their colors, their china plaques, and their laced and embroidered paint-rags, and using the mighty brushes heretofore dedicated to more sublime tasks, they began experimenting upon potsherds and Spanish tiles with tubes of vitreous paints invented by Lacroix, proposing to test their capabilities. A certain fascination was found in these experiments, and the true artist spirit,





which never despises a vehicle and always tries to pilfer from the most unpromising material a new means of expression, was soon found scrutinizing the lay-out of the decorator with something like respect.

"I got a regular Constable tempest in a teapot yesterday," said a landscapist to a figure-painter. "Did it with my thumbs, you know; atmosphere, cirrus clouds, retreating storm, blue of heavens after rain, same kind of hit-or-miss as in palette-knife work, and infinitely less of that bad plastery look that you find on canvas."

"I believe I am getting the pearly shadows on flesh to-day, and it is a tile that is teaching me," said the figure-artist. "Those difficult gray shadows on the temples, under a girl's hair. Oil-painting never quite resembles flesh, you know; it is brutal and dirty in its essence. Water-color is flimsy at the best, and cannot give the modeled quality of a living sitter. Now I am thinking that the solution lies in faience, — solidity of oil, diaphanous look of water-color; in fact, a grand union of all those qualities of ivory, velvet, changeable moth's-wing, and rose-petal which bother us so awfully when we wrestle with a girl's mouth in flesh-painting. Why not take up the tile decorating craze more deeply? There is Collin, you know, doing better heads on barbotine than anything you'll find in Raphael ware or Limoges enamel."



Comparing notes in this way, a handful of proud and "serious" artists — that is, the most rattlebrained scapegraces, to listen to them out of working hours, to be found in the two hemispheres — formed the habit of meeting together, and punishing the crockery of Iberian potters. They took credit in bending to this frivolous material their knowledge of effect, their experience, their workman's craft gained in wider fields; so that many a deserving idea



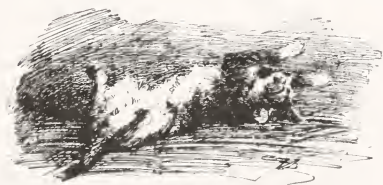
of royal descent, that had come knocking at an artist's brain in the firm expectation of being promoted to canvas in a gallery-picture, or to fresco in a cathedral, found itself constrained to an installment on a tile, and degraded to consort with a kettle on a hob. This unfeigned respect for base materials, so only that they carry their message well, is perhaps one of the charms of the painter temperament. And akin to an artist's commission of his best inventions to vehicles so frivolous or despised is the impression to be derived from the talk of artists among themselves, so studiously slangy and Bohemian, so shy of pretension or pedantry,

yet with a sense behind it of capable work achieved, and of a good many heights and depths of feeling habitually sounded.

The little circle consisted at first of painters. A sculptor or two, modeling with wax in a snuff-box lid, or with clay on a tablet, swelled the number soon; then, as some of the members were fair amateur musicians, they introduced virtuosi of their acquaintance, and

an impromptu concert enlivened every meeting. Soon it became a question how to keep the flood-gates of the Club against Society, which beat at the barriers demanding admission; for not a few

of the members had a demoniac talent for telling an after-dinner story, for improvising a monologue in dialect, for delivering society-verses with point



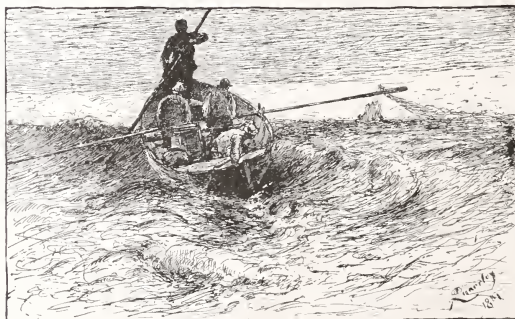


and distinction; and as their feats in this line became privily rumored abroad, the whole tribe of professional diners-out, of agreeable rattles, of gentlemen who had heard this direct from Mr. Lincoln, of raconteurs, of comic men, in fact, began to pull at the latchstring with tears in their eyes, and piteously beg for admission.

The Tile Club managed to keep select. Their only approach to a rule, code, or by-law was that which restricted their roll-call to a specified and very small number. Otherwise, they had no regulations, they had no parliamentary usages, nor Matthias' Manual, and, for the very best

of reasons, no member was ever known to be out of order.

In the warm weather they organized excursions. Don't you remember, Polyphemus, that enchanted wilderness life under the lighthouse at Montauk, among Indian kings and tarry fishermen? Shall you ever forget, Griffin, the long float in the upholstered canal-barge, so often imitated since but never matched by others in its noiseless splendor? And the flashes of ocean scenery, Sirius, between the whirling sails of the Amagansett and Easthampton windmills? And the piratical life in the wrecked ship, Catgut, when you fed us with champagne and spring chickens from Long Branch among



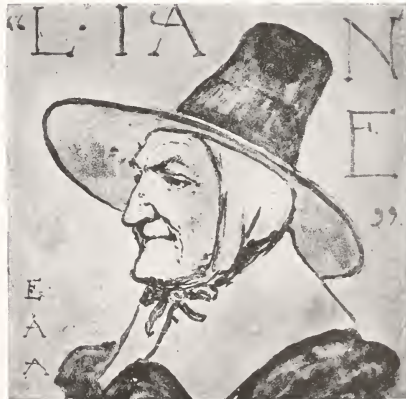




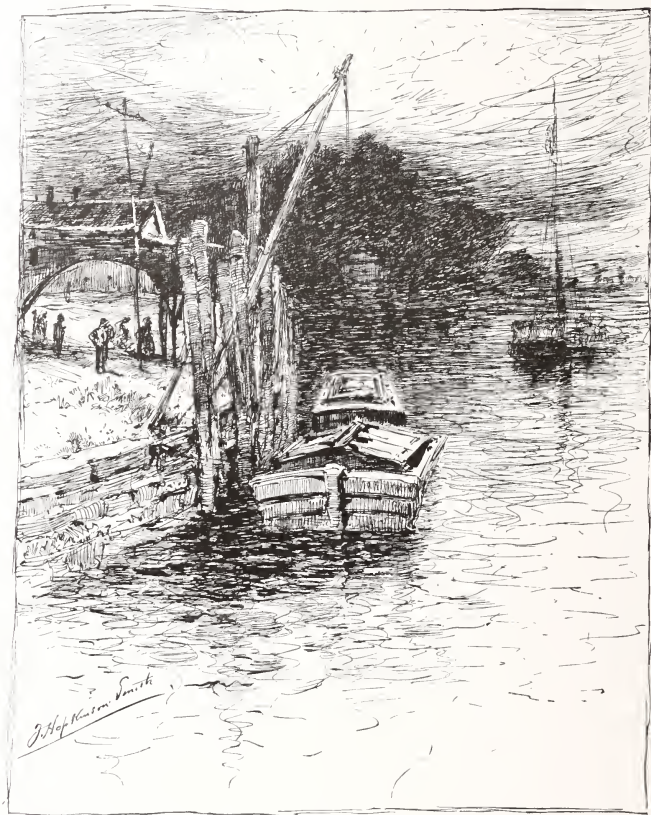
the barefoot wreckers? Store up the pleasant memories, my pals: they make life longer.

Groups of young fellows are much alike, but it was perhaps a specialty of this group that the members of it were all about equally at home in the different quarters of the globe. An artist touches at the various climates and continents easily and negligently, without a particle of the semi-heroic feeling of the self-improving tourist, but simply as an apprentice steps into the neighboring shop to see what patterns of tools they are using. The vacations of other people being his working time, he steps hither and thither with a busy eye, making the world his work-room, throwing himself into a battle to see how it would

paint, or, if he falls into a robber's cave, falling, well-braced, in the habitual attitude of his toil. "When the Calmucks were spitting like cats over my pocket-book," said the Bulgarian, "I noticed how their sheepskins rustled in the firelight; that's where I got the costume you liked for my John the Baptist." "Once the Bernhardt pulled caps in my presence with Colombier," remarked the Terrapin. "She did n't know I noticed it, but I had the sensitive ready, and I used her for my Lucifer." "There was a Chinook nearly swamped me in a pirogue on the Dalles of the Columbia," observed the Griffin, "but I turned him into a Sindbad, and sold him for more than his hide will ever fetch." "That sirocco among the pines of Ravenna," claimed the Marine, "turned us all sick, but it gave me the most beautiful color I ever saw for my John at Patmos." And the Owl gratefully remembered a cer-



tain baked landscape between Burgos and Miranda, where he had to pay a fancy price for a bottle of water to wash in an aquarelle, as the most luscious expression of peachy bloom at sunset. Thus the bits of workman-



ship our friends brought for criticism into their retreat were collected from every climate, so that far and near were matters of no account. The ideas they there discussed were produced unaffectedly from the Vatican, the thieves' quarter of London, or the Sierra Nevada. The streets of Naples, Vienna, and Algiers were about equally present in their minds; and they assembled around their friendly table in coats from Oxford and from Madrid, in shoes half worn on the sides of Vesuvius and in the galleries of Gibraltar, — Sirius coming in in gloves bought at Etretat, Polyphemus clothed from the seal



Arctic Supply.

he was reported to have slain in Alaska, Catgut lugging in a violin which had grown dry in the Paris Conservatoire, and the Griffin crowning himself with a fez exchanged with some Arab. All these comrades, challenging each other by names that were meaningless to the cold world, used the club-room as a convenient neighboring planet, whither they could resort with their budget from every country and from which the various points of the globe were precisely equidistant.







ONE OF THEIR MEETINGS



LET us take *any* evening; not *choose* an evening; but just surprise the little Club at its usual habits; and the result will be something like this.

A few crystals of blowing snow crackle under the feet as they course along the pavement, settling in the fissures. It is blowing ferociously, and the hard crystals sizzle and sting as they drive through the air; but the moon is clear, or manifests itself clearly as it rolls tumultuously

through the spits of cloud. The electric lights on the adjacent Fifth Avenue, holding the moon in some contempt as a sickly rival, engrave black shadows on a ground of deadly blue-white. A glorious American night, in the finest season of the year.

The members present themselves like sailors tumbling up out of the hatch. They run in actively, shaking off the snow, and contributing their fur caps and ulsters to a heap or cairn of such articles collected on an easel in a corner.

The atmosphere inside is almost close, almost hot, and in fact smells savory; it is an atmosphere of cooking. Cadmium, an expert at a beefsteak, is bending with a rather rosy face over an elaborate gridiron arrangement, which grips with its various legs at the wood coals glowing in the back chimney. He sacrifices to his task to-night one of the loveliest shirt-fronts ever invented by a famous *bonnetier* on the rue de Rivoli; his pink arms and translucent linen give him the air of a superiorly clean *chef*, — he being, so



far as he is clothed at all, in what is called evening dress,— and help to make his tenderloin the more appetizing. Eagerly leaning over to assist him is Polyphemus, whose dimpled elbows are the pride of the Club; the latter is dropping lumps of butter, and also stands ready with two or three mysteries, a powder, a liquid, and a certain potherb, which he sprinkles on at calculated moments, and which give his beefsteaks the unmatched Polyphlegmatic flavor.

“Will the Chestnut be here?” asks Cadmium.

“Yes,” says the Polypheme, whose foible is omniscience, “the Cimbria was hailed at the Hook at sunrise; the Chestnut hurled his hand-bag over the side to me

at noon; at two we had spaghetti at Morelli’s, at five the Griffin met him buying Whatman at Devoc’s, and he promised to save the evening for us.”

The distant Bishop was helping a big, bright brass kettle to boil at the anthracite fire in the front chimney. Looking up from this onerous task, he insinuated a remote objection.



“Oh, promised to come, did he? That’s a bad symptom.”





"I've known fellows to promise things and then do them," chimed in the hopeful Cadmium. "Chestnut may happen to remember, simply as an eccentricity. You're always thinking the world so faithless, Bishop."

"So, then, if a blue-eyed fellow promised to marry *you*, you'd believe it?" asked the skeptical prelate.

"I'd mind my own business," said Cadmium, reverting to the tenderloin.

The preparations for a home-made dinner were actively afoot; the sable attendant, in a kitchen underneath, was understood to be preparing mallard



ducks and a mystical preparation served on skewers, to be more fully alluded to directly. A silver chafing-dish, already in place on the middle of the table, was ready to heat the oysters, whose resolution into a delicious brew

was the affair of a few moments, only to be undertaken at a given time, so as to punctuate with perfect accuracy the latter minutes of the career of the steak on the coals. Besides the brew of oysters, another instantaneous dish, the Welsh rarebit, existed at present in a merely unconditioned or attainable state, the material being ready, but the preparation of it being left to the ultimate decision of the appetites of the party.



The evolution of the oyster into the American stew, when achieved by the aid of a real group of soulful and Raphael-eyed artists, is surely one of the most beautiful of earthly sights. The plump creatures look so happy as they eddy slowly round and round in the bubbling butter at the persuasion of a long silver ladle; they so nearly burst with complacency, as the difficult moment of perfection strikes their gentle senses; their shirt-frills and collars turn simultaneously so curly, starched, and firm; and they accept with such thankfulness the beatific

superfluities or ultra perfectionments out of the sauce-bottle dribbled by the capable Griffin; that to assimilate into one's system a few fish thus promoted into full sympathy with man gives one all the satisfaction of a pleasure surely reciprocal. The members were crowding round to approve this fine sight of oysters whirling in their golden ecliptic within a silver platter; in another moment the dish would be done, and the steak would coevally be in its last stages of finish; the celery was white and crisp in its delicate bouquet, and the potatoes were small and mealy; culinary steams of highest promise met and interlaced in the air, and the youths of the Club were excitedly putting their heads together so as to be illuminated in a bewitched or Macbeth-like manner by the flaming alcohol. While thus concentrated, they were somehow suddenly aware





that a new arrival had come among them. It was the Chestnut, just popping in from a distance of three thousand miles to share their dinner.

To betray any surprise, to extend any emphatic welcome to a comrade, simply because he was from abroad, was not in the humor of the Tile Club. One of their members was then in India, another in Spain, and Polyphemus was expecting a brother from Hayti. The Chestnut merely took the hands of the two members between whom he had inserted himself, and the whole band, linking arms, danced three times around the ellipse of the large table, silently and with a kind of formality. This accolade effected, they all fell to

upon the nourishment set before them.

"Fellows," remarked the Chestnut, "I just came to tell you that I have had a real Cavalier saddle made by a saddler in Norfolk Street, just off the Strand. Hogskin, wooden pommels, stirrups like those in *Vandyck's Charles II.* Modeled after one of Prince Rupert's. Cost like the dickens, but I am so much in his debt already that I scarcely noticed the fellow's bill."

His mouth, unctuated with oyster, smiled blandly. To say that the Chestnut was a favorite with the Club would be to put it unfairly. There were a score of favorites, — that being the number of



the possible membership. A new arrival was not to be spoiled with mollycoddle or petting, but was to be used for what he could teach. The studio property he had just described was admired speculatively, as a possible good,

and those who expected to want to borrow it made him describe the saddle accurately, with sketches in burnt match executed on the tablecloth. Then the member from England was exhaustively cross-examined. News from Du Maurier and Burne-Jones, and Alma-Tadema and Sargent, were demanded and given with such graphic painter's minuteness that



the listeners could fairly scent the varnish in the ateliers of those distant craftsmen. The Chestnut had come over for a few days, in an almost accidental way, just to decide on the binding and title-page of his *Illustrated Beowulf*. This done, he was to

happen back again fortuitously. He was wanted for a grand phaeton tour among the Cumberland Lakes; in this projected excursion he would lock knees with the father of the Princess of Thule, the father of the Scholar Gypsy, and the bookkeeper of a successful firm nicknamed Triumphant Plutocracy.

They looked approvingly upon the Chestnut. When he had last been seen



among them he was exhausted with nerve-strain and overwork, and had a way of sending off dish after dish of Delmonico's most inspired composition with a thoroughbred air of disgust. Fallen among the St. John's Wood contingent of the Tile Club, however, he had taken to pedestrianism and boat-

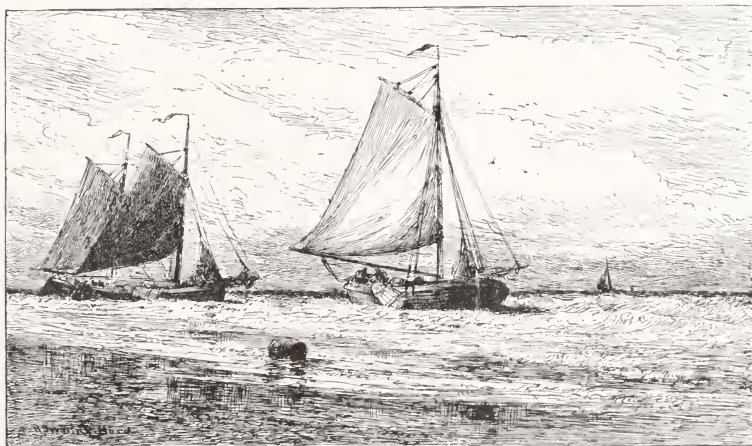




ing, and had put a shoulder upon himself that inspired the sincere respect, if not of his friends, at least of possible enemies. And here he was, plump, hard, and with a lively color on his nose acquired on the *Servia's* main deck.

It was an individual trait of the Chestnut's that he was not in the least affected by overtures of friendship from men whose names are ringing in the world's ear with considerable distinctness. These he kicked up everywhere, and often forgot. We all have our titillable spot of vanity, however, and Chestnut was probably a little vain of having added a word to the English language.

On his first presentation among the people on the other side of the ocean, —among the good fellows, that is, —he had been immediately asked what stories he knew. He gave them inedited Mark Twains, recondite Artemus Wards, and Lincolns before the letter, in exchange for their Blue China Ballades and Blayds of the college period. Then he bethought him of his



Chestnut Story,—a time-honored jest of his Tile Club day. Taking his courage in both hands, he poured it out with an air of conviction and good faith

before a large dinner-party. Now the Chestnut Story is one of those interminable pointless humbug narrations which the French call a *scie*. Eternally getting to the point, and never arriving there; exciting vast interest



and calculation in regard to the chestnuts on a certain tree; promising a rich and racy solution in the very next sentence; straying off into episodes that baffled the ear and disappointed the hope. This tale could be prolonged by him, when he was at his best, for a good part of an hour, without ever releasing the attention or satisfying expectation. As time wore on, the more solemn and practical of the guests would look at each other gravely; the more astute sons of Belial, perceiving the joke, would steal out and fulminate and explode in corridors. At a given moment the tableful would perceive





the crux, and burst into horse-laughs, with the acknowledgment that they had been vended at an inconsiderable price; and there would be one delicious, venerable Englishman, who, when all were roaring, would confess that he was always slow at catching the point of American humor, and would ask his neighbor to oblige him by telling what it was all about. This reprehensible hoax, let off as a test upon successive parties of those whom Britain numbered among her brightest and most downy, was by little and little quoted in social circles as a symbol. English literary men, who had heard it and been taken in by it, began to use the title in their writings as a type of

an endless or unsatisfactory yarn. And the word Chestnut, crossing the sea, returned again to the land of its birth, and became the accepted definition of what is tedious, old, and interminable.

"Boys," was the unrepentant wretch's first word when he was able to (like Bryant's waterfowl) rest and scream among his fellows, "what do you think? I gave the Chestnut last Wednesday week to a tragedian, a proctor, a bishop, and a baronet. And they swallowed it for thirty-seven minutes by my watch."

"Give your faculties to your tenderloin," said the Owl, paternally.

"It's not done," said a mildly pessimistic Tiler in the distance; "streak of Rubens' flesh-color all along the middle."

The Owl regarded the blasphemer with the look that Ramses bent on the contemptible Khetas. "The steak is a culmination," said he, "and the man who cannot appreciate it should take a rope and go out and be an Art Critic."

"The steak is a Velasquez," said Cadmium in a juicy whisper, closing his eyes with a religious expression.

The platter was cleared to the last droplet of brown juice. Then there slowly rose upon the scene, from underground kitchen regions, the head of a negro. The man was black,—uncompromisingly black, immaculately black, passionately black; he seemed to have given his mind and soul to growing black, and to have succeeded. And in relishing contrast was his liv-



ery, consisting of an apron and jacket, white, crackling, and enameled from the laundry. He balanced on three fingers a long dish, upon which in regimental order lay a little flock or brood of mallard ducks ready to crumble and melt to the tooth with tenderness.

"Ce gibier me connaît," whispered Polyphemus to Chestnut. "I under-



stand carving those mallards, and I promise to save you a decent bit of the liver wing."

The servant changed plates with the undulating precision of movement belonging to his race, serpentine through the crowded space without jogging anybody, and displaying the large curved movements, the strength, and the obsequiousness of his kind.



The mallards dedicated their dark and dryish flesh, crushing itself between the teeth like an unguent, to the building up of more art-pabulum for the American market. The diners became less enthusiastic and more beatific.



"A dreamy sensation seems to be coming over me," remarked the Terrapin, stretching his giant length. "I think it must be that I have taken my Apollinaris too strong."

"Don't give up the ship," said the Griffin, with an almost anxious eagerness. "There's something yet, and it's my specialty, you know."

"Your specialty, Griffin?" asked the new-comer.

"Yes; the Kibobs."

The Kibobs explained themselves in due time. When the last bird had flown, and the table was once more cleared, the Afrite again emerged from



below, bearing some long spits or skewers, upon whose silver surface were beaded certain tender lumps of juicy baked meat that had been held over a clear fire alternately with little sheets of bacon; the fire had been so skillfully moderated that it had first hardened the outside of each lump into a sort of integument, and then applied itself to cooking the morsel with every drop of its natural juice imprisoned. Whatever bastings and seasonings of undiscoverable spices were superadded remained a secret of the kitchen; there were the luscious mouthfuls, than which no fig could be riper and tenderer, just irritated to piquancy by the contact of the bacon.

The tempting little droplets would have made anybody feel hungry.

"Lucullus dines with Lucullus to-night," observed the Chestnut.

"As we have a Cockney among us to whom these last trifles seem to be a pleasing and appreciated novelty," said the Griffin, with a flattered glance at the Chestnut's swiftly-diminishing plateful, "I will just mention how I came to learn the cooking of the Kibob."

"That will be a good story. The Griffin has the floor," said Polyphemus.

There was a reprobate member who smoked; this culprit reached for the pouch of Lone Jack. There was another who was now seen dipping his beak into a fine old dated grès-de-Flandres mug. The Griffin, rolling a mild blue eye around the table, and stroking his blonde beard, proceeded with his tale.

"It was some miles to the south of Biskra. The distribution of the oases and the little desert streams in that region is peculiar; the water runs in a small rivulet right through the desert, bordered with a narrow bank of grass,



almost as sharply defined as if a gardener had trimmed it with his spade. From space to space this green widens into patches of every conceivable size, until at great distances apart they are big enough to be called oases, and to afford camping-ground. Now I had done, on the day I am thinking of, a very imprudent thing. I had left my wife sketching on an artist's stool in one of the green patches, where a peculiar sort of plant that I don't know the name of afforded a feeding-ground for some desert birds; they seemed almost tame, and the poor girl thought she could make a magnificent sketch." ("We all know how capitally your wife paints birds, Griffin," put in Cadmium.) "Without much thought, I wandered off



with my own equipment, inspired with a strange sort of confidence by the profound silence,—the hush of the Sahara, you know. What made me so foolish was that my wife herself was so completely at home. There was that little woman crumbling bread before those birds, precisely as if in Madison Square. There she was, sitting at her easel, and there was I, off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon. I presently found a stretch of desert—a mountain outline—that fascinated me. The sands, you know,



take color from the set of the wind, and here was a color of pearl, and an effect precious as a dividend day. It was certain to pass soon. I settled down to work, my feet on that absurd little stair-carpet of green grass, my stool in the Sahara desert. I became completely absorbed in my work, and certainly never

looked round; I didn't even know that my wife was out of sight, and a good deal more. The critical moment was on me; I had laid on my preparatory color, and had just arranged and dipped up the completing color, which would cover the first and make just that rare tint. This nervous



instant made me think, and all in a second it flashed on me how imprudent I had been. My small woman was quite out of view. The desert was likely at any moment to be crossed by utterly noiseless natives, — barbarous fellows from Timbuctoo, as heartless and innocent as animals, perhaps, for whom white people in the desert were simply like coin in a bag. Smashing my wet sketch into the sand, and leaving my traps, I started back on the run. There were so few indications that I made several mistakes. I was half an hour getting back to my wife. And there she was, and a negro of the desert, very black

in the legs and very white as to his cloak, was bending over her with a knife in his teeth."

"Ah, this is palpitating," said the Chestnut. "Hurry along."

"The negro was leading a sheep by a rope. My wife had bought the sheep, feeling hungry, and we all made the Kibobs that afternoon under the darkey's tuition. I sent him back for my things. There is saffron in this very dish which that negro gave me."

This narrative accompanied the gradual cleansing or denudation of the silver spits, and seasoned the Kibobs to admiration. Shortly after, breaking into groups, the Club fell into that jargon of art and travel so delicious to the professional. The Chestnut had been exploring for old English inns, and had found several unchanged since Shenstone; he gave the details, the number of beams across the ceiling, the size of the little window-panes, the style of cap worn by the maids. The scenes, described pictorially, made paintings in the ear of the hearer. This started reminiscences from others. Nothing is more real, more unconventional, than the report of a painter-tourist, who sees the world without a Murray, who strays into storied cities without asking a word of their history, and who unerringly defines the age and period of portrait or bit of architecture from knowledge of the change of modes.

Towards midnight the patient black put in another appearance. "Would the gentlemen take their supper of rarebit?" he asked.



F. Hopkinson Smith

The preparations were complete, — a rare cheese was in cut, a noble dish was heating over the chafer, nor was there wanting those more imaginative resources of cream and egg which change the rarebit from a thing of back-kitchens to an ideality. But the Club, for once, was replete.

“Twelve o’clock, Tilers,” said the Eagle, reaching for his seal-skin, “I have a model coming at nine.”

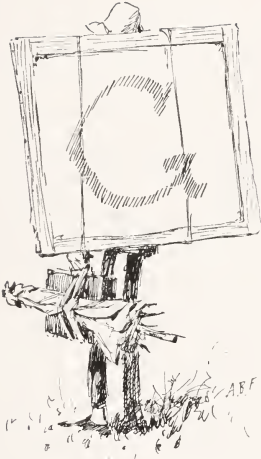
“By Jove, so have I,” nervously exclaimed Cadmium, consulting his watch, “and she won’t wait a minute.”

A rush of cold air; a crunching of dry snow under foot; a group of muffled figures at the outer gate; some cheery “good-nights,” with echoing answers up and down the white still street, and the meeting was over.





SHOP TALK



ET out ! ”

“ I said eight thousand dollars. ”

“ Painting portraits ? ”

“ Too true ! ”

Cadmium and the Owl were conducting this conversation, and Briareus, the Haggis, the Saint, the Marine, and the Builder were listening.

“ Do you mean, you ill-fated bird, that Linseed earned eight thousand dollars in three months last summer ? I ’ d like to know how. ”

“ That ’ s what he did. ”

“ Did what ? ”

“ Knew how ! ”

“ But he *don't* know how, ” insisted Cadmium. “ Why, I sat alongside of that fellow at the Ecole des Beaux Arts for two years. He can't draw, and never could. His flesh was beastly, modeling worse, and technique — a smear ! ”

“ Granted, my boy, ” said the Owl. “ I did not say he could paint. I said he knew how to earn eight thousand in three months painting portraits. ”

“ He never painted a portrait worth eight cents. Why, I knew ” —

“ Dry up, Cadmium, ” interrupted the Haggis. “ Go on, Owl, and tell us how he did it. ”

“ By moving with the tide, Haggis. Using some common sense and a little tact. ”

“ You see, Linseed arrived here last June. The first thing he did was to order half a dozen six-foot canvases. Then he left for Newport, and drove direct to his brother-in-law's cottage on Belmont Avenue. In thirty days he knew everybody worth knowing. He dressed well, talked well, played tennis, drove tandem (his brother-in-law's), and dined out every night. When anybody wanted to know when he would begin painting, he yawned

lazily, said he was tired out by his last Salon picture, and needed rest; had only run over for a few weeks, while Bonnat and Henner were away in Switzerland, — so lonely without them, you know. And then he would



slip up-stairs, lock the door, haul out those six-footers, and give each one another coat of bitumen. The next thing he did was to refuse a thousand dollar commission offered by a real estate man who wanted a two hundred pound wife painted in a green silk. This spread like the measles. It was discussed at the clubs, dinner-tables, and Casino, and before sundown Linseed's exclusiveness, good taste, and artistic instincts were established.

"When he closed his eye on the fat dowager, she being on the outer edge of the sanctified social circle, he opened it on a pretty young married woman occupying the dead centre. He went into a spasm over her beauty, — so Grecian and pure, 'you know;' such an exquisite outline, especially in the mignonette robe (Worth's); grew confidential with her

husband at the club, obtained permission to make just a sketch, 'only the size of your hand' (wanted it for his head of Sappho, Berlin Exhibition); then he rented a suite of rooms, carted in a lot of old tapestries, brass, Venetian chests, lamps, and hangings, finished the sketch, draped it in yellow silk, gave a five o'clock tea, refused a big price for it from the husband, accepted, instead, a three thousand dollar order for a full length, hauled out one of his six-footers, covered it with asphaltum and a faint resemblance, gave another tea (servants this time in livery); everybody delighted; got orders for two half lengths, fifteen hundred each; finished them in two weeks; declined two more on account of extreme fatigue; disappeared with the first frost and the best cottage people;





reappeared in New York, borrowed a bric-a-brac studio, moved in some big palms, a few servants, a string band, and Pinard; exhibited his sketch, his two half lengths, and his six-footer (original wearing her mignonette costume, and sipping tea, seated in an antique chair); took three more full length commissions, — two to be painted in Paris, the other one in New York in the spring; was followed to the steamer by a bevy of beauties, half smothered in flowers, and then disappeared in a halo of artistic glory just eight thousand dollars in."

The Haggis broke out into a roar, in which everybody but Cadmium joined. "And you call that art, do you? Owl, you are the most mercenary brush I know."

"I do," replied the Owl, winking at the Builder. "I call it the art of making the most of your opportunities, and putting your best foot foremost. Linseed chose to encase his in a patent-

leather pump and silk stocking, and walk into a parlor. You want to shuffle around in carpet slippers, live in a garret, and wait until some Dives of a Diogenes climbs up your rickety staircase with a connoisseur's lantern to discover you! Then you expect him to lay a Brussels carpet to the sidewalk for you to amble down on, introduce you to an awakened public, make a centre of your last picture in the exhibition, and engrave your addled head for two magazines the same month. Merchants, lawyers, physicians, and scientists, when they



have anything to sell, go where there is somebody to buy; why not an artist?"

"Just like a Jew peddling suspenders," remarked the Saint, who up to this time had been a quiet listener. "Owl, I am ashamed of you," he continued. "You have too fine a perception of what is true and beautiful to believe any such bosh. The pursuit of the ideal in art absorbs a man's entire life. The hard study and grinding work he goes through to enable him to produce something really good is wearing and exhausting. This I know to my cost, but the stupidity and neglect of the public to understand and appreciate it after it is finished is the severest disappointment the artist experiences. I am poor, and suppose I always will be. I love my work for the good it does *me*. It is three fourths of my existence, nine tenths of my happiness, and all of my ambition; and I would see your chuckle-headed money-bags in Hades before I would move out of my studio six inches to get from him a commission for a monument a mile high, unless I got something else out of it besides the sum of money set down in the contract."

"Bravo for the Saint," shouted Briareus and Cadmus in a breath; and before the famous sculptor could protest, his mouth was pried open with the pewter rim of the loving cup, and half its contents poured down his throat, while the Owl was condemned for rank heresy, and sent to toast the bread for a rarebit.

"Of course," said the Owl, looking up from the fire, his face blazing red, "I don't expect you fellows to agree with me. You all occupy garrets, carry



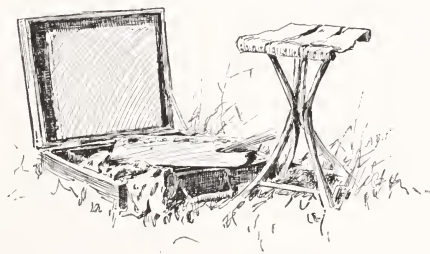


up your own coal, shuffle around in carpet slippers, and live on one pound of bologna sausage and quarter of a pound of tea a week. You and Briareus have n't got any bric-a-brac or dress coats or palms or brother-in-laws or things. You just starve all the time, and like it. Now everybody knows the Saint believes what he says, because he is an artist; but you painters, who hope to be and who" —

The sentence was not finished—not audibly. The Owl was flat on his back with the toast jammed over his mouth. Briareus and Cadmium were standing over him balancing the toddy-kettle, and threatening to scald him if he did not renounce his heresy and recant.

"Don't hurt him," yelled the Haggis. "We can't spare him."

"Could n't we," replied Polyphemus, just entering the door, and dropping into his native dialect. "Begorra, Haggis, if the devil was looking for liars I would n't know where to hide ye."





Ande Peto

C. S. 12

AROUND THEIR WOOD FIRE



A BRIGHT wood fire is blazing away, whirling its sparks up the wide chimney, and warming to a comfortable temperature the group of newly-arrived and half-chilled Tilers circled before it.

The polished mahogany table reflects a unique collection of pewter mugs clustered about a huge magnum of Bass.

Brightening the hearth is a cheery little brass kettle humming away all by itself, and puffing tiny jets of white steam from under its restless lid.

As each member enters the cozy room he is greeted with the customary shout of welcome. These shouts vary from a dismal groan to a chorus. Sometimes snatches of old songs with new words are interwoven with the Tiler's name, and often without rhyme or reason.

Why, for instance, the Terrapin should always be saluted with the refrain, —

“ Oh, poor Terrapin ! Oh, poor Terrapin !
FISH ! ”

the last word in a stentorian chorus, no mortal man knows ; and yet no sooner does the smiling face and sand-papered head of that worthy reptiler darken the door than every member in the room joins in that piscatorial chorus.

The Terrapin invariably stops, assumes an air of interest, listens eagerly with his hand shading his ears, as if it was the melody his soul most loved, and then, when it is all over, gravely pours himself a bumper and drinks in silence.

Again the sound of the bell tinkling down the narrow passage-way comes up from its subterranean opening. An overcoat is thrown at a Tiler, a hat not his own is forced over his eyes, and he is unceremoniously hustled into the cold world,—that is, into the snow-covered garden to open the outer gate. In a moment he returns, letting in a great gust of fresh, crisp air and a brother Tiler, who is of course welcomed as usual. It proves to be Briareus. He is in a state of wrath.

There had been a meeting at the Academy, and the aged fossils and young fungi who formed the geological and botanical collection which enriched that institution had advanced ideas so utterly at variance with the established code of the Tenth Street Munich School that Briareus had left in disgust.

“What do you think, Tilers, of old Umber asserting that if Velasquez had lived to-day he could not earn a decent living as a third-rate portrait painter?”

“Think he told the truth,” cut in Cadmium, an ardent admirer of the great Spaniard. “But posterity will do *us* justice.”



At this reply the Haggis broke out into a prolonged Oho! in which the Club joined. When order was restored,—that is, when the steady thump of the butt end of the Griffin's carving-knife had drowned all other sounds,—its possessor remarked that Cadmium's opinion reminded him of the distinguished Anglo-American painter with the single eye-glass, the white top-lock, and the tuneful name, who, on being approached in the Royal Academy by an enthusiastic Briton with the remark, “Oh, sir; when I see your pictures, I say to myself there are only two masters,

—Velasquez and you,” replied, “Too true, dear boy; but why drag in Velasquez?”

While this raillery proceeds, a group of Tilers, oblivious to the noise, have their heads together at the upper end of the table listening to the Saint, who is giving the Builder and the Bishop a description of his new alto-relievo.



Farther along, seated upon the old settle between the open fireplace and the hob, are the Terrapin and the Hawk, discussing the latest results in color-printing.

The Hawk advances the theory that wood-engraving is as dead as Julius Caesar and copperplate, and that hereafter it will be one, two, three, and it is done!



“Just think of something pleasant, my dear, and keep still. Before you can wink your eye you have the girl’s head which Terrapin finished yesterday photographed from the original canvas on a sheet of zinc, slapped on a Hoe press, and by sundown an edition of fifty thousand copies is in the hands of the newsboys. ‘Here’s your horiginal ’ead by the famous hartist, B. Terrapin, five cents,’ accompanied by an editorial paragraph congratulating the public on the publication, and calling particular attention to the fact that the enterprise of the journal will be appreciated when it is known that at the present writing the paint is not dry on the Terrapin’s canvas.”

“Order!” yells the Catgut. “Stop that infernal din in the corner, and you fellows drop that art stuff and listen to a sonata that will melt your soul into honey.”

Joe, the sable attendant, is already lighting the candles and bringing out the music-rests.

Catgut proceeds to unroll his violin, stripping it like a mummy of its overlying swathes of green baize, tightens up his bow, caulks the cavity between his Adam’s apple and his chin with his handkerchief, and lays lovingly against it his old Cremona. Meanwhile the Husk runs his fingers lightly over the keys of the piano, a sharp rap follows from Catgut’s bow, and a dead silence falls upon the noisy room. They know too well the exquisite touch of that wrist and finger to spoil a single harmony.

As the delicious melodies of Beethoven float through the room the occupants settle themselves in their easy chairs, listening quietly, puffing silently, and occasionally reaching for a short pull at the pewter mugs, which are within the grasp of every man’s hand. The spell conjured so deftly by the Catgut has had its effect. They urge him to continue. Now they want Schumann’s sonata in A minor, or Chopin’s symphony in B minor.

But the Catgut pleads a devouring thirst, and the Husk says he has not eaten anything "for fourteen days, so help him," and insists on Joe broiling him a kidney before he touches another ivory. This subterfuge is met with much opposition. In fact, the demand is considered farcical. Music they want and will have.

However, before brute force is used, another shout of welcome goes up, and the big burly form of the Baritone fills the half-open door. He has arrived in the nick of time. In an instant he is unceremoniously stripped of his overcoat and hat, shot into a seat facing the piano, and ordered to sing without further delay an old Bedonin love song, greatly prized and oft repeated, under pain of having the top of his pewter mug roofed over and forever sealed and he go dry the balance of his life.

The Baritone is the beau ideal of the Club. He has a voice once heard never forgotten. It is as delicious as a 'cello and strong as a full brass band,



and has a quality of lifting one up into mid-air by his waistband and holding him out at arm's length. He does full credit to his reputation, and is for the hundredth time vociferously applauded.

As the last words of the beautiful song die away, a shout of laughter is



heard from around the table. In an instant the humor of the room has changed. Polyphemus is telling of a night he had at the Garrick. Then the Owl follows with one of Uncle Remus's "reminisances," as he calls them; and then story after story is fired off in quick succession, reminding one of a target company at practice.

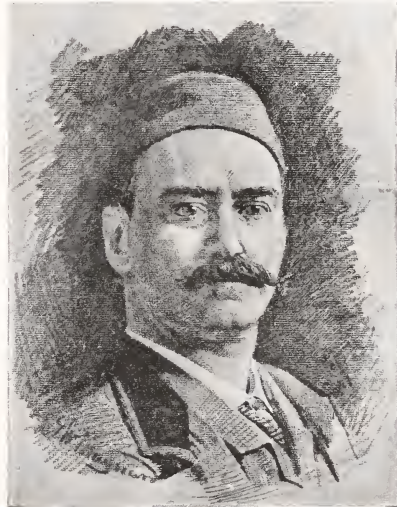
Soon the talk drifts into studio gossip, and the history of past, present, and future "pot-boilers" is told and commented upon. Later on the Pagan heaves a deep sigh and discourses of Capri and of a certain dark-eyed girl who filled his heart and emptied his pocket in the old student days.

"Is that why you painted the 'Sibyl'?" said Briareus.

"The same, my boy."

"But now tell me, Briareus," said the Pagan, "how you came to paint that garden with the girl in the hammock. Whose girl was she, anyhow? Yours, or the natty fellow's in the flannel suit?"

"Neither, you heathen. She was from one of the provinces. Her father was an officer in the French army, and her mother an invalid trying the bracing air of the Holland coast. Their apartments joined mine, and, like mine, opened upon a delightful garden. Our acquaintance began to blossom through the slats of the dividing fence, ripened on the front steps, and flourished vigorously until she was gathered into a hammock under one of my trees. The young fellow in flannel was simply a brother brush, who passed a few days with me on his way to Venice."



"All true," said the Owl. "I remember the old garden, and the fence, and the tree. I examined them carefully by the light of a kerosene lamp one night last summer. I had been in Haarlem only one hour when I heard from the porter of the hotel that Mynheer Briareus was stopping at Zandvoort, a few miles distant.

"I ordered a trap, drove six miles through a sand heap, arrived after dark,

borrowed a lantern and a Dutchman, groped my way down crooked lanes, over sand-dunes and grass-tufted hillocks, to a long low row of whitewashed houses, pulled a bell, strode past a pretty white-capped fish-girl, through a narrow hall, and halted at the open door of a low bedroom.

“Briareus was in his shirt sleeves, his back to me, writing a letter. If



some one had asked him at that moment where was the Owl, he would have said three thousand miles away, and wagered a fortune on the truth of his statement.

“‘Come in off that wet grass,’ I shouted suddenly. It would have done you good to have seen him jump.

“‘By the Great Horn Spoon,’ he cried; ‘there is but one man on the globe who uses that expression, and’ —

“‘I am he, old man,’ said I, falling into his outstretched arms.”

“But about that garden and the girl,” inquired the Bone.

“Oh, he showed me the picture just commenced, and the outline of the girl; and as I returned that night to Haarlem, insisted on my examining the garden by lamplight.”

“Did n’t show you the girl, did he?” said Cadmium.

“No, only the outline.”





"Of course not," muttered the Haggis. "That's as near as anybody ever gets to Briareus's girls."

"Or he, either — with a brush," added Polyphemus.

"Now tell us why you painted the Bridge, Owl?" said the Marine. "Was there nothing else for you around this metropolis but this great ugly pile of masonry and dingy old houses underneath?"

"Plenty of them, my boy; but one afternoon I came out of Harper's just at twilight, crossed the square, and caught sight of this great mass looming up against the evening sky. I was in search of a subject for our exhibition. This magnificent structure seemed to convey to me the impression of the genius of the nineteenth century towering above the eighteenth. The next day I looked the subject over carefully, dropped into a corner grocery, borrowed a blue lead pencil and a sheet of brown paper, mounted the steps of the elevated road, made my first outline composition, which I never afterwards altered, returned the next day with a fifty-inch canvas and an easel, and spent the succeeding eight on the platform. It was early in December, and when I finished I was stiff as an icicle and half frozen through."

"Served you right," said Cadmium. "No business to paint out of doors. What you wanted was your brown paper sketch and your impression. If you had waited those eight days and let it simmer in your brain, it would have amounted to something."

"Picture might, brain never would," said Polyphemus.

"That's bosh, Cadmium, and you know it," said the Marine, famous for his out-door work. "To paint nature truthfully you must surprise it, catching it on the wing. The impression first, of course, but the impression as it is, and on the spot, not after it has been strained through your personality. To paint a thing as it is you must paint it in four hours. This is all the time any man has to paint sunlight, and he has to be clear-sighted and quick of hand to get that. He can take these four hours either at morn, noon, or afternoon; but he cannot record truthfully during any longer time, simply

because the sun moves and the shadows grow longer or shorter. He cannot finish or continue it the next day. There has been a rain, perhaps, and the half begun yesterday is dry and sunny. He can, of course, finish the other half cloudy or wet, or, worse still, leave it to be finished in the studio from pencil memoranda or memory. The first plan fills it full of lies and the second full of himself. Neither have anything in common with nature. He can wait, perhaps, for another day of similar sunlight effect, and try that. But how about himself the next day? He is not the same man. During the interval he has had bad news from home, or the fragment of an undigested potato disturbs him, or his eye is filled with some new and more interesting subject. So he stumbles along, the *esprit* quite gone, until, as in the parable, the last state of that sketch is worse than the first. The fact is, it takes two men to produce a picture, — one to paint it, and the other to kill him when he has done enough.”

“Talks like an art critic,” said Polyphemus, who sustained that relation to the outside public.

“And with as little common sense,” said the Bishop, who had had a recent picture slashed into mince-meat by that Argus-eyed gentleman the week before, and who still felt a little sore over it.

“How about Corot and Daubigny and Millet,” said Briareus. “Do you suppose they sat out-doors with the thermometer at par or zero, and pegged away in the rain and heat?”

“Certainly, my boy,” said the Marine. “That is just what they did do, and did it every day they could drag their bones out into the air. Corot spent three years of his life mastering one effect of silvery light behind gray-green foliage, and then wanted to bury himself in a self-dug hole in the ground because he had not reproduced all there was in it. But you fellows claim to paint the earth, and think you do it. Interiors, still life, landscape, figures, portraits, genre, marines. You do them all. If you don’t see what you want, ask for it. That is your modern doctrine to the public.”

“Will somebody open the window and let the Marine fly out?” said Haggis.

“Shoo fly, don’t bodder me,” broke in the Husk; and in another minute the old negro chorus, taken up by nearly every member in the room, drowned all other sounds, and cut short the Marine’s caustic reply and the discussion.





"Kidney ready, sir." This fact had been apparent to the whole room for some time, and also the fact that Joe, who held the toothsome morsel on a hot plate, had been beating Juba with his foot and keeping time with his head to the melody.

The Husk pounced upon it, dusted it with cayenne, plunged his beak into the great pewter tankard (the loving cup of the Club), and then said he was now ready for another sonata.

But the room was no longer music-mad; again had its humor changed.

It was instantly voted to stand the Husk on his head in the back garden in the snow, and erect the Catgut's violin over him as a tombstone, if he sounded another note.

"Hold on, Bulgarian; I am going your way," called out the Saint from his end of the room, waking up to consciousness and the hour after a prolonged argument with the Builder as to the original condition of the Milo, and as to whether the Venus had held her arms up or down in the land of her birth.

The Bulgarian waited, then wrapped his overcoat about him, fastened over his ears an astrachan that had done good service under Skobeleff, said "How," and, linking his arm in the Saint's, disappeared through the door.

Then the Horsehair, Catgut, and Builder followed, and soon the cozy room contained only the Pagan, the Owl, the Haggis, the Bone, and a few others.

The hands of the clock in the tall tower near by pointed to midnight.





CLUB CHESTNUTS WARMED OVER



“FILL that kettle with water, Polyphemus, and brew us a punch. I have a story to tell.”

The Owl waited until the water ran over the hob, and a lemon and flagon and a few lumps of sugar had added a savory flavor to the clouds of smoke drifting in horizontal lines about the room, then refilled his pipe, balanced his feet on the fender, looked around quietly to see that everybody was comfortable, and began as follows : —

THE OWL'S STORY.

One afternoon about sundown I arrived at a small town in the western part of the island of Cuba called Artimeza. It consisted of a long rambling street, flanked on either side with palms, at one end of which was a low rickety posada offering scanty accommodation to man and mule. Being a loyal Tiler I thirsted for a glass of beer, and being ignorant of the name it bore in Spanish, I was in a fair way of going without it, when a pale, dark-eyed young Cuban stepped forward, opened up a conversation with good English, and a bottle of Bass with a poor corkscrew, and sat down with me to share both. We spent the evening together, and the result was that he promised to breakfast with me at the posada in the morning, provided I would visit his uncle's plantation later the same day.

The next morning before I finished dressing the court-yard of the posada was invaded by a cavalcade, consisting of a volante drawn by two mules, with their riders, two saddle-horses, and three negro attendants.

Don Hacher explained that he had neglected to inquire of me whether I



was his second wife, and presumably not included in the gift. While coffee was being served my friend gave me a short history of the plantation.

It was the largest in the vicinity; had in former times been famous for its coffee yield, but was now given over to the cultivation of sugar.

Since the revolution its revenues had been greatly curtailed, only a portion of the estate tilled, and many of the buildings, including a great distillery, a



hospital, and slave-prison, abandoned. Seeing me greatly interested in a portrait which covered a panel in the room, he said, lowering his voice and motioning to his uncle, —

“It is his grandfather. He was, as you see, an officer in the German army, and served under Frederick the Great.”



When the extreme heat of the day had passed Don Hacher offered to show me the estate. We went alone.

The distillery, part of which was underground, was in ruins. The floor was covered with green mould, the walls reeking with slime and ooze; the casks, held together only by their rusty iron hoops, were rotted and worm-eaten, and the great retorts and furnaces incrustated with rank vegetation. It was the home of the lizard and centipede. Not destroyed by violence or accident, but by the decay of the grave.

The prison quarters were in but little better repair. Manacles half eaten with rust were hanging from the cobwebbed-beams, and the rude wooden stocks were broken and useless.

"What is this great stone building?" I asked, finding that Don Hacher passed it without remark.

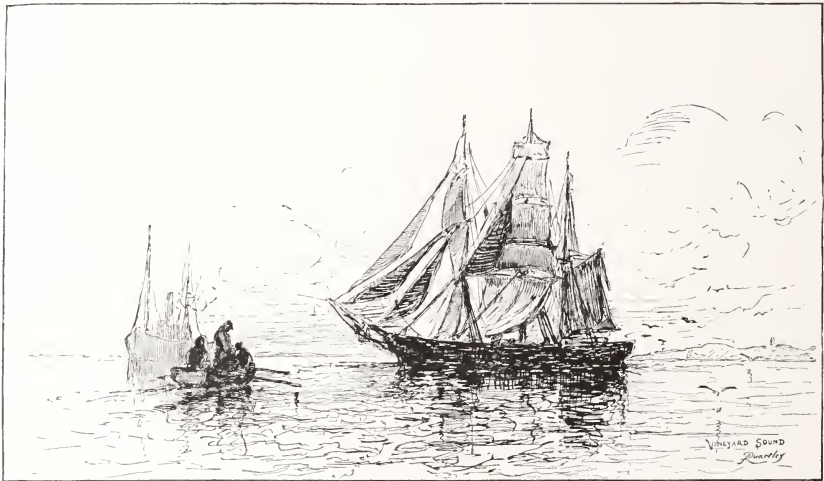
"It was once used as a hospital. The crack which you see from the roof downwards was the mark left by an earthquake several years ago."

"Can I go inside?"

He hesitated, pushed open a swinging-door, and discovered a flight of circular stone steps, protected by a light iron railing, winding up lighthouse-fashion.

"Where does this lead?"

Don Hacher did not reply, and seemed absorbed in thought. Then he turned to me, and said, —



"As you are a stranger and a gentleman, I will show you."

He walked to the corner of the building, called a negro, gave him an order in Spanish, waited until he returned with a bunch of keys, delayed until he was again out of sight, shut carefully the swinging-door behind us, and preceded me up the winding stairs.

A draft of hot air from a grated window met me at the landing, at one



end of which was a corridor terminating in a wooden door heavily barred. The casing and lock were covered with cobwebs, and it was difficult to find the key-hole under the layers of dead spiders and insects. It had evidently remained so many years.

Don Hacher turned the key, swung around the wooden bar, pressed his weight against the door, and forced it open.



A great cloud of black dust arose, nearly suffocating us.

When it settled I found myself in a room about a hundred feet long, wide and high in proportion, and lighted by three large iron-grated windows without glass.

The ceiling, once richly frescoed, was now stained and blistered by exposure to storm and wind beating through the open gratings. Heaped up over the floor and into the corners and against the side walls, in some places liter-

ally ankle deep, were great drifts of dust and débris, consisting of the dried feathered-skeletons of dead birds, lizards, bats, beetles, and other insects.

The walls were lined on all four sides with wooden cases extending to the ceiling, and their shelves were loaded down with a solid mass of books.

Books everywhere, — on the window-sills, bleached and half rotten ; on the floor, buried in black dust-drifts ; in the corners, on shelves, on small tables and ledges — nothing but books, manuscripts, charts, and folios.

I examined their titles closely. They were German, French, English, and Spanish publications, denoting early editions of Shakespeare in vellum and



leather, voyages of Bruce and Cook in calf, editions of Homer, Æschylus, Plato, Plutarch, and others of the classics in fine bindings, — all showing the library of a man of extensive learning, wide reading, and unusual cultivation.

My eye lighted on an edition of *Don Quixote* in two volumes superbly





bound in white leather, now rich and yellow with age. As I lifted one volume from the shelf the backs came apart in my hands. The imprint showed that these were the original first editions, volume one of which was published in 1605 and volume two exactly ten years later. On the title-page of the second volume was written in Spanish, "Cervantes and Shakespeare meet in heaven this day, April 23, 1616."

In amazement I turned to speak to Hacher. He had crossed the room and was standing by a large table. He was watching me curiously.

"See," he said, pointing to the table and a chair beside it, "here is where he studied and worked, and wore his life away."

I drew closer. The top, once green velvet, was covered with layers of grime and dust. A dead bat swarming with vermin lay upon an unfinished manuscript. The wooden inkstand, bristling with quills, was a mass of tangled webs and dead flies. Scattered about were seals, some pieces of faded tape, a candlestick without a candle, a rusted knife, and the usual knick-knacks and trifles.

"Don Hacher, what is the meaning of this? Whose library was it?" I asked.

He looked at me earnestly, made no reply, and shook his head. Then turned abruptly, replaced carefully the volume I held in my hand, conducted me to the door, barred and locked it, and preceded me silently down-stairs and out into the blinding sunlight.



For some time we walked together in silence. When we neared the hacienda he stopped, looked me steadily in the eye, laid his hand on my shoulder, pointed in the direction of his uncle, and, placing his fingers to his lips, said, —

"Remember!"

"I will, Hacher; but answer me one question. Why is this library closed?"

"I cannot," he said firmly. "It is a mystery."

"Did you never find out?" inquired the Haggis.

"Never," replied the Owl. "I could not ask the uncle. Hacher had

closed the conversation so far as he was concerned, nobody else spoke English, and I left for Havana the next day."

"Belonged to the old cock whose portrait hung on the wall," suggested the Pagan.

"And was ordered kept closed in his will under forfeiture of the estate," added the Boarder, who is something of a lawyer.

"Anything you please, boys. I have given you every scrap of information I own," said the Owl, lighting a cigarette and refilling his glass.

"Most extraordinary," said the Bone, who is the bookworm of the Club. "What was the date of the Quixote? Bound in *white* leather, too. Must have been the very first edition."

Then the Haggis, who had recently returned from a West Indian cruise in a friend's yacht, related some experiences at Martinique, in which some dusky brown girls, dressed in full suits of silver bangles, were thoroughly mixed up at a diving

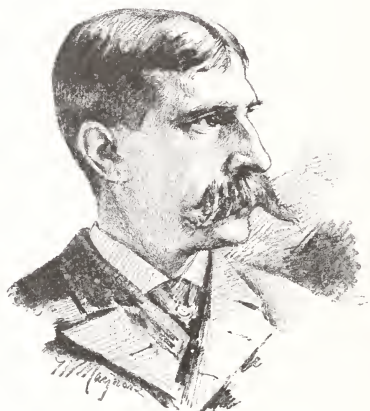
match with a boat's crew which he commanded.

"I know the girls," put in the Griffin, "regular bronze Venuses, every one of them. Dive like ducks—catch a dime quicker than a trout. But, speaking of Cuba, I ran a muck one Sunday afternoon in Matanzas which I won't forget in a hurry."

THE GRIFFIN'S STORY.

Running up from the Bella Mar, or Beautiful Sea of Matanzas, is a narrow canal, leading to the slaughter-houses of the city. Every morning and evening, at sunrise and sundown, a procession of sharks moves up from the sea, glides through this canal, feeds on the offal, and returns. It is one of the sights of the place, and I took it in.

That I am alive to-day to tell of it only proves the doctrine of the "survival of the fittest" and of the "devil take the hindmost." I was in a small boat following these sharks and watching their fins cut through the water, when I heard the sound of beating tom-toms on my right, accompanying the





weird, nervous, irritating, jerky music of the African dance. I knew the sound instantly, for I had frequently heard it in Morocco, and once saw such a performance in Tunis.

It flashed over me all at once that many of these negroes in Matanzas were victims of the slave-trade and must still keep up their old customs. In an instant I had moored the skiff and began following up the sound. Soon I reached a row of low whitewashed houses, one of which was surrounded



by a group of men and women—all negroes, and all decked out in their war-paint of artificial flowers and gay colored ribbons.

Edging through the throng I caught a glimpse of the inside of the dancing-room through the low window.

On the floor, backed against the rear wall, sat four negroes. This was the band. One was beating a kettle-drum, another a small circular brass gong, a third held a long two-stringed instrument something like a Chinese guitar, the strings of which he rubbed with a piece of bone well rosined, and the



fourth slapped with the flat of his hand the sides of a rude-looking drum made like a barrel, except that its top and bottom were covered with dried cowhide. Such instruments are quite common anywhere on the north or west coast of Africa.

The other three sides of the room were packed full of negroes, young and old, evidently under the influence of the music, rocking themselves backward and forward, keeping time with their hands, and beating their foreheads. In





the middle of the floor was a negro wench dressed in what was once a stiff-starched white dress, now a limp and bedraggled gown. The perspiration was dropping from her face and arms, her eyes were red and protruding, her mouth open, and she panting from the exhaustion of the dance.

Opposite her and following every motion, now imitating and now leading in a new step, was a bullet-headed young negro dancing barefooted. He, too, was nearly used up. The music, however, seemed to pump new life into them. When the girl would reel and stagger a fresh outburst of the band would buoy her up and save her from falling. But it was evident that the pace was too steep. Suddenly I saw her throw up her arms, clutch at the air with her fingers, and fall headlong on the floor.

A yell went up like a Comanche war-whoop, the girl was picked up, hurried into the adjoining room, laid on the floor to cool off and come to, and the floor was cleared for a fresh couple.



This gave me a chance to slip through the door and into one corner of the room, where I could watch the next figure more closely. The fact was I had at home an unfinished canvas, which I had begun in Tangier, showing an Arab encampment. I wanted to introduce a group of dancing figures in the

foreground, and this seemed an admirable opportunity to study them. It certainly possessed all the elements of a barbaric dance.

The sylph that stepped out next was a thin, angular, raw-boned young negress, whose kinky hair was twisted into little pig-tails, each one of which



was bound with a different colored ribbon. Clinging to her lank figure was a bright calico dress trimmed with paper flowers. Covering her feet, which were about the size of lemon-boxes, were white kid slippers. These she flapped on the floor like a flail.

She began by walking around in a circle, flirting a red silk handkerchief in the faces of the sitting and kneeling negroes and challenging them to dance.



Before I could move, the first negro (who I found afterwards was the lover of the girl) jumped through the window and made a spring at the throat of the colored gentleman who was using me as a cushion. The first slash he gave came within six inches of my head, the next sliced down the dancer's arm, ripping open his shirt and spattering the wall with blood.

I looked up through a mass of arms waving chairs, razors, knives, and clubs, watched my chance, gathered myself for a spring, cleared the window at a bound, and made a bee-line for my boat. It was the closest shave I ever had. I can see now that ugly sickle-shaped dirk sweeping around my head. It gives me a cold shiver every time I think of it.



Presently one shot up like a jack-in-the-box, seized the handkerchief, and the fun began.

Hardly had he moved a dozen paces when a negress next me gave a piercing scream, and the next instant the head and shoulders of the most devilish looking negro you ever saw were thrust through the window. The girl saw him, gave a shriek, turned a light green, and bolted through the rear door. Her companion whipped out a murderous-looking dirk, and backed into my corner with his legs spanning my knees.





The Griffin got up, poured a thimbleful from the flagon, drank it, and moved one seat nearer the fire.

The Tilers also hitched their chairs closer, and the Bone whispered to the Pagan that the story was good enough to print, and should not be wasted on ears turned upside down.

Then the Builder followed with an adventure near Athens, resulting in the loss of some precious manuscripts collected at great cost of purse and risk of limb, and asked Briareus if he knew Greece.

"No, it is not in the line of my wanderings; but if you would like to hear about an adventure I had in Madrid some time since I will recall it for you."

BRIAREUS'S STORY.

Three years ago I was in Madrid studying Velasquez. It was the summer I made those copies of the Actor and *Æsopus*.

One afternoon I left the gallery, strolled down the Prado, and lounged into a café. The first man I met was Minton, a brother brush from Boston. While we were taking our coffee I overheard a conversation at the next table. A Spaniard was describing how he had deliberately tortured a dog to death merely to see his dying agony. It seemed so incredible to me that any human being could be so cruel that, regardless of my friend's warning, I left my seat, crossed to the Spaniard's table, and, smothering my indignation, asked him in French if he was a scientist or surgeon.

"No, señor."

"Why, then, did you torture the dog?" I demanded, angrily.

"Patience, señor. He was mine. Can I not do as I please with my own dog without your permission?"



Before I could reply Minton interfered, dragged me into the street, and hurried me away to another café.

The next morning, while passing through a crooked street near the Puerta del Sol, I was startled at seeing a white spaniel thrown from a doorway. He landed almost at my feet, and lay writhing and howling with pain.

In an instant all my anger of the previous afternoon came over me with a rush. "Here's another brutal Spaniard," I said to myself. "The poor fellow's agony shall be short anyhow." Reaching down, I struck him between the ears with the heavy end of my cane, crushing in his skull. He rolled over dead.

The next moment I was confronted by a frowsy-headed Spaniard, literally livid with rage. He could hardly keep his hands from my throat. Through



his ravings I gathered the information that he owned the dog and wanted to know why I had killed him.

I saw it was hopeless, with my limited knowledge of Spanish, to explain to this maniac all my philanthropic reasons for quickly ending the poor creature's misery, and so I merely confined myself to insisting that he should immediately accompany me to a neighboring café, where I knew a Spanish friend who spoke English. Finally he agreed to go. On the way I turned

over in my mind just what I would say to him. When we reached the café my friend was not in. Then I bethought me of the Legation but a few squares distant. But my lunatic would not budge. What he wanted was an apology, a new dog, or blood, and he wanted it right away.

I drew out my card, inscribed upon it my address, and added the hour at which I would receive him or his second. He tucked it carefully away in his vest pocket, raised his hat, and disappeared around the corner.

I hunted up Minton and posted him on the situation. He looked very grave and considered it critical.

Promptly at seven P.M. a card was brought me on a tray, bearing this inscription:—

DON IGNACIO LAVANDEYRA.

The Don followed the tray. He was still hot, but cool enough to be handled without a pair of tongs.

Minton opened the ball. He explained that I was a renowned philanthropist, dearly loved dogs, and could not stand seeing one abused and tortured.

“Ah! how very gentle is this American. He does not like to see the dog hurt by his master, and so he cracks his skull himself, eh?”

“Certainly,” said Minton. “So that you could no longer torture him.”

“Me! I torture him? I have reared him, señor, from a baby dog. Every day I feed him three times. He sleeps on my bed at night. For a year he has had



fits. Then he goes into the street and lies down. In five minutes they are gone. Then he comes to me again."

"You need n't laugh, boys. I have n't gotten over it yet. I did n't mind apologizing to Don Ignacio a bit, and I must say he took it very well and behaved very handsomely about it. It was bad enough to have murdered the poor animal; it was worse to see Minton rolling over on the floor, and holding his sides and laughing himself sore. Ever since that day when he sees me he pulls out an imaginary card and goes through a pantomime with an invisible dog and a walking stick. Sometimes I want to brain him on the spot."

"A sudden thought strikes me," said the Bone, usually called the Funny-bone, from the sad and rueful gravity of his habitual expression. "We have had a good talk and a pleasant time to-night. We have had previous good times, and we are going to have more. Why should we not extend the benefit? Why be so selfish about our good luck? Why not have an At Home?"

"For the best of reasons," said Polyphemus; "we have no room."

"Well, then," said his interlocutor, "there is another kind of publicity which does n't encroach on any one's room. We'll just tease the outsiders by inviting the whole public to come and visit us. But in a peculiar way."

"What way is that?" asked Polyphemus.

"In a book!"

And the idea, after duly shocking everybody, was adopted in the form the reader sees.



THE END OF THE WORLD

A BOOK OF THE TILE CLUB

DATE DUE

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| JUL 11 1995 | AUG 11 1997 |
| JUN 20 1995 | AUG 19 1999 |
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